



## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING HEALTH STATUS**



## A. MATERNAL, INFANT, AND CHILD HEALTH

### Maternal Mortality

- Establish a systematic review of all maternal deaths to gather information for the development of preventive programs.

### Infant Mortality

- Implement the recommendations to reduce low birthweight rates (see Low Birthweight section below), since this is a leading cause of infant mortality.
- Establish a systematic review of all fetal and infant deaths to gather information for the development of preventive programs.
- Carry out public and professional education on risk factors for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Encourage the cessation of smoking and avoidance of second-hand smoke during and after pregnancy.
- Extend home-visiting and case-management services to mothers who are at high risk for an adverse outcome.
- Organize a community-based approach designed to increase awareness and promote collaboration about issues central to effective infant-mortality reduction.
- Monitor the status of pregnancy risk factors with the LOUISIANA PREGNANCY RISK ASSESSMENT MONITORING SYSTEM (LaPRAMS) and employ this information for policy development and implementation of appropriate, effective interventions.

### Low Birthweight

- Ensure access to prenatal care for all pregnant women, especially those with low incomes, teenagers, and those living in medically underserved areas.
- Improve access to prenatal care by removing barriers and promoting the use of non-traditional obstetrical practitioners in Louisiana (e.g., nurse midwives, nurse practitioners).
- Develop a system of prenatal screening for multiple risk factors (e.g., substance use/abuse, domestic violence, and depression) associated with poor pregnancy outcomes, so that identified women can be referred early for appropriate management.
- Promote healthy oral hygiene during pregnancy, with coverage of treatment of periodontal disease being included in Medicaid covered services.
- Promote appropriate weight gain during pregnancy, as Louisiana data reveal increased risk of low birthweight in women with improper weight gains.
- Promote interconceptional care with increased availability of Family Planning services.
- Reduce substance abuse (including use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco) among pregnant women through public education.
- Increase counseling and treatment services for substance-abusing pregnant women.



- Increase WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC) PROGRAM services for pregnant women.
- Improve surveillance systems to gather information on risk factors in low birthweight pregnancies.
- Increase support for Partners for Healthy Babies, which promotes healthy prenatal behaviors and early prenatal care through media messages and a toll-free hotline that links pregnant women with healthcare providers.
- Initiate educational programs for healthcare providers and pregnant women on identifying the signs of premature labor.
- Analyze data collected in the LAPRAMS database to assess preventable risk factors associated with low birthweight and to help identify effective and ineffective elements of existing efforts.

**Child Health**

- Provide access to preventive health services (e.g., health screening, immunizations, parental education) to infants and children in low-income families or to others who do not have access to such services due to geographic or financial barriers, or a lack of providers.
- Support outreach efforts through the Covering Kids and Families Initiative for the Louisiana Children's Health Insurance Program (LaCHIP) in order to increase access to health services.
- Expand health-system development efforts to all areas of the state to insure that all children have access to comprehensive health (primary and specialty), mental health, social, and education services.
- Develop and implement statewide and community-based initiatives for the prevention of unintended injuries, which are the leading cause of death in children over the age of one year.
- Support local Child Death Review Panels for the review of all unexpected deaths in children under 15 years of age in order to develop interventions for the prevention of such deaths.

**Child Abuse and Neglect**

- Increase public awareness of child abuse prevention and positive parenting and promote parenting education.
- Expand home visiting services to families at high risk for child abuse and neglect, utilizing the Nurse Family Partnership Visiting Model.
- Educate healthcare providers in the assessment of the parent-child relationship for early detection of families that are at risk for child abuse and neglect.
- Implement, in several regions of the state, a new program for at-risk pregnant women and women with babies using a health/infant mental health intervention focus to strengthen overall child outcomes, including reducing the risk of abuse and neglect.

**Child Care**

- Promote health and safety in out-of-home childcare by utilizing childcare health consultants.
- Provide expertise and leadership in the development and enhancement of childcare standards.
- Sustain the coalition of state and local health professionals, government and community agencies, child care providers, and concerned citizens to address health and safety childcare issues.



- Utilize a multi-disciplinary community approach to improve quality of childcare facilities.
- Utilize childcare health consultants to assist childcare centers to integrate children with special health care needs into their facilities.

**Teenage Birth Rates**

- Facilitate the community's capacity to address teenage pregnancy through provision of information and resources.
- Provide educational enrichment and economic opportunities to strengthen the family.
- Involve both the public and the private sectors in developing community-centered, sustainable, collaborative, and adolescent-focused programs.
- Encourage age-appropriate sex and family life education at home by parents.
- Provide age-appropriate family life education in schools, focusing on abstinence and the delay of sexual activity.
- Ensure access to information on safe sex practices and contraceptives.
- Provide culturally appropriate, intensive, long-term programs that recognize family and community values.
- Provide resources to adult mentors, peers, and community members with similar backgrounds and experiences to facilitate a variety of approaches.
- Mobilize multi-disciplinary teams involving teachers, health professionals, social workers, and community leaders.
- Develop multi-message programs addressing school drop-out; real life options; job exploration, training, and placement; and individual and family counseling when necessary.
- Provide comprehensive adolescent health clinics that are community-based, school-based, and/or school-linked.
- Ensure youth involvement in program design, implementation, and evaluation.

**B. INFECTIOUS DISEASES****Surveillance and Epidemiologic Response**

- Conduct surveillance activities to identify disease trends and risk factors for acquiring infections.
- Coordinate or implement preventive measures required after reporting communicable diseases.
- Investigate outbreaks and recommend or implement preventive measures.
- Develop appropriate statewide guidelines for the prevention, surveillance, and management of communicable diseases of public health importance.
- Assist healthcare facilities in planning and implementing infection control programs.
- Provide education and information to the public and health professionals regarding infections of public health importance.

**Bioterrorism**

- Provide for early detection of exposure to bioterrorism agents and early identification of diseases due to bioterrorism agents.
- Prepare for early and efficient response to bioterrorism events.
- Plan preventive measures to minimize adverse consequences of bioterrorism events.
- Disseminate information on identification and response to bioterrorism events to health professionals.

**Other Infectious Disease Objectives**

- Conduct surveillance of antibiotic resistance through passive reporting of invasive diseases through active laboratory surveillance of select agents and compilation of hospital antibiograms in a statewide summary.
- Implement a broad-based program to promote appropriate antibiotic use for outpatient upper respiratory infections directed to the health professionals and the public.
- Implement an educational program for judicious use of antibiotics in health-care facilities.
- Coordinate and foster in sexually transmitted disease clinics and HIV/AIDS program sites screening and educational activities to prevent hepatitis C.
- Provide education and information to the public concerning hepatitis C.
- Continue active surveillance for influenza cases each year in order to inform health-care providers and the public about the proper time to be immunized each fall.

**Tuberculosis (TB)**

- Continue the practice of directly observed therapy (DOT) to ensure completion of therapy.
- Expand surveillance for TB through liaisons with hospital infection-control practitioners and private medical groups in high-incidence areas.
- Enhance the capacity to provide field-based outreach and ensure thorough case and contact follow-up.
- Ensure that the inpatient treatment facility at Villa Feliciana remains a treatment option for drug-resistant, recalcitrant, or other TB patients who require close supervision of therapy.
- Assure prompt medical assessment of foreign-born persons entering the state with evidence of TB.

**Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS**

- Encourage condom use among persons who may have high-risk sexual behavior and increase distribution of and accessibility to condoms.
- Provide STD and HIV testing and counseling, group educational sessions, and outreach to persons at high risk for STDs and HIV/AIDS.
- Increase access to clinical services for people with STDs to ensure rapid treatment and thereby reduce spread of STDs and vulnerability to HIV.
- Increase awareness of asymptomatic STD infection, especially gonorrhea and chlamydia in the young adult population, and the need to screen both men and women for those infections.



- Enhance partner notification activities for syphilis, all other STDs, and HIV/AIDS.
- Enhance statewide efforts to promote syphilis elimination.
- Continue support for public awareness and professional education regarding HIV/AIDS in pregnant women, the effective use of anti-retroviral drugs in preventing perinatal transmission, and education for all people regarding the public health threat of STDs and HIV/AIDS.

## C. ORAL HEALTH

- Continue to strengthen the fluoridation program infrastructure within OPH.
- Continue to promote expansion of community water systems that adjust water fluoridation levels to optimal range for the reduction of dental cavities.
- Ensure continuous monitoring of all public water systems that fluoridate and provide technical assistance for all public water systems operators.
- Provide education to the public, policymakers, and dentists regarding the optimal water fluoridation status in Louisiana.
- Increase access to pit and fissure dental sealants among school children in Louisiana.
- Provide education to the public, policymakers, and dentists, regarding current pit and fissure sealant utilization rates among populations at risk for dental caries.
- Work with the DHH Bureau of Health Services Financing to increase Medicaid dental coverage for at-risk special-needs populations.
- Provide education to the public, policy makers, dentists, and obstetricians regarding the relationship between periodontal disease in pregnant women and premature births.
- Continue to work with Medicaid/LaMOMS outreach programs to inform pregnant women about the dental program available to them.
- Provide tobacco cessation training to future dental healthcare professionals.

## D. CHRONIC DISEASES

### Tobacco

#### Evidence Based Strategies that Work

- Increase the excise tax on tobacco products. This would directly correlate with a decrease in tobacco consumption by youth and provide funds for increased tobacco control efforts to be accomplished and thus help in long-term improvement of health for Louisiana's residents.
- Conduct an effective mass-media campaign as an intervention which is useful in reducing the consumption of tobacco products and increasing cessation among current tobacco users.



- Incorporate a policy requiring a comprehensive provider-education program and insuring a provider-reminder system for smoking cessation by health-insurance providers which include cessation services. This would allow for increased smoking cessation efforts by those individuals who use tobacco.
- Eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke by working at the local level to enact local smoke-free air ordinances which encompass smoke-free workplaces, public places, schools, and restaurants, among other facilities.

### **Diabetes**

- Advocate maintenance of optimal weight levels and physical activity.
- Increase intake of fruit, vegetables, and grains while reducing fat in diet.
- Promote working continuously with a physician to control blood sugar levels and monitor hemoglobin A1c through regular testing.
- Encourage adoption of healthy lifestyles.
- Advocate maintenance of normal blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Encourage annual retinal exams.
- Promote daily inspection of feet.
- Urge patients to have their feet checked annually.
- Encourage annual influenza shots.
- Encourage pneumococcal shots.
- Promote daily self blood-glucose checks.

### **Heart Disease/Stroke**

- Advocate for programs that promote community awareness of signs and symptoms of stroke and the need to call 911.
- Advocate for reimbursement of rehabilitation and follow-up care for heart disease and stroke victims.
- Advocate for systems change that encourages adherence to national guidelines for appropriate stroke treatment.
- Advocate for systems change that encourages adherence to national guidelines for appropriate treatment and follow-up of heart disease.
- Advocate for policy development that ensures increased adherence to national guidelines for the prevention and control of high blood pressure and high cholesterol through screening and follow-up.
- Advocate for programs that assist worksites in providing and promoting detection and follow up services for employees for control of blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Advocate for programs that inform the public that high blood pressure and high cholesterol are a major modifiable risk factors for heart disease and stroke.



- Advocate for programs that inform the public that having blood pressure and cholesterol checks is an important first step in reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Advocate blood pressure checks every two years.
- Advocate blood serum tests to measure cholesterol levels every five years (if over age 35 years).
- Advocate cessation of tobacco use.
- Promote increased regular physical activity.
- Encourage maintenance of optimal weight levels.

**Asthma**

- Recognize the early warning signs of asthma. These may include shortness of breath, coughing, increased breathing rate, and wheezing.
- Avoid or control known asthma triggers.
- Monitor asthma with a peak flow meter. This device measures how well air is moving through the lungs.
- Follow special instructions about use of medications, including dose, frequency of administration, guidelines for changing dose or adding medications if appropriate, and always report adverse effects to a clinician.

**E. ALCOHOL, DRUG, AND OTHER ADDICTIONS****Prevention**

- Implement research-based/evidence-based prevention programs statewide.
- Maintain the sale of tobacco products to minors at a 10 percent or lower non-compliance rate through the Synar Program.
- Continue the CENTER FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION'S State Incentive Grant activities empowering the Governor with enhanced capability to coordinate, enforce, and integrate effective prevention strategies into the state's Prevention Plan for its residents.
- Develop and implement a compulsive gambling prevention curriculum in the school system and for elderly citizens statewide.
- Continue to offer Tobacco Cessation Services for all Office for Addictive Disorders clients.
- Explore a Medicaid waiver or pre-authorization as a means of providing substance-abuse treatment services to the Medicaid-eligible population.
- Partner with the Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control of the Louisiana Department of Revenue regarding the access of alcohol to minors.



**Treatment and Prevention**

- Close existing treatment and prevention gaps and provide a seamless system care through a comprehensive array of community-based treatment and prevention services for individuals with addictive disorders and those at risk for developing addictions.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of treatment and prevention initiatives through the implementation of best practices and on-going development of the workforce.
- Provide a comprehensive array of prevention and treatment services to meet the needs of problem and compulsive gamblers.
- Continue the development of recovery homes and therapeutic community models as part of the community-based treatment continuum.
- Implement recommendations from the Governor's Health Care Summit.

**F. UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES**

- Promote policies and resources for the proper use of child safety seats, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, personal flotation devices, helmet use, and other proven injury-reducing techniques.
- Enforce policies regarding alcohol use and vehicles. Provide resources to prevent recidivism.
- Establish social norms about the impropriety of letting others drive or pilot a vessel while intoxicated.
- Establish social norms of lowest possible acceptable risk within housing, transportation, school, and playground environments (e.g., lighting, surface materials, bicycle-friendly roads, and signaling).
- Promote policies and resources for supervision of children by responsible caretakers, including daycare centers, schools, sports teams, and playgrounds.
- Provide resources for tested injury-prevention actions.
- Promote resources for a coordinated trauma system.
- Provide resources to support a rigorous hospital discharge reporting system, requiring use of "codes" to provide information on injury events from emergency rooms and hospitals.

**G. INTENTIONAL INJURIES**

- Support policies to reduce firearm injuries and deaths.
- Support policies and promote social norms about safer firearm storage.
- Support policies and resources to reduce domestic and sexual violence.
- Support social norms which repudiate violence against women.
- Support policy and resources to protect and rehabilitate children who witness or experience violence.
- Promote training and resources to reduce suicide.



- Provide resources for, and promote social norms that require, a safe environment and opportunities for rehabilitation for incarcerated youth and adults.
- Support resources for a coordinated trauma system.

#### **Child Death**

- Support policies recommended by Child Death Review Panels.
- Promote policies and resources for supervision of children by responsible caretakers.
- Promote resources to identify and prevent child abuse.
- Promote policies to provide “emotional detoxification” services for adolescents and adults abused as children.

### **H. MENTAL HEALTH**

- Assure the provision of a system of mental health services based on best practices, which are responsive to the assessed and self-identified needs of consumers, families, and the communities in which they live.
- Provide the greatest impact on the quality of life for individuals within the state mental health system.
- Provide quality services that are cost-effective.
- Provide person-centered care to meet the individual’s and family’s needs.
- Provide a continuum of services in collaboration with multiple stakeholders.
- Decrease the stigma associated with mental illness by increasing public education efforts.
- Enhance consumer and family participation in the planning, delivery, and monitoring of services and settings, especially concerning suicide issues.
- Focus on prevention and early intervention efforts to minimize the impact of mental illness.
- Treat each person served by the mental health system in a holistic manner with services tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Educate and train all physicians to recognize the signs and symptoms of persons with mental illness and/or at risk for suicide, so that appropriate referrals can be made and/or intervention measures taken.